

## Menu Planning Checklist for Programs Feeding Young Children

- ☐ Do menus meet the meal pattern requirements of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for all children for the day?
- ☐ Is a good source of vitamin C (such as oranges, broccoli or cabbage) included in at least one meal or snack daily?
- ☐ Is a good source of iron (such as dried fruits, enriched or whole-grain breads, dried beans or turkey) included in at least one meal or snack daily?
- ☐ Is a good source of vitamin A (such as carrots, tomatoes or sweet potatoes) included in a meal or snack at least three times a week?
- ☐ Do menus include a variety of different foods?
- ☐ Do menus include a variety of fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables?
- ☐ Are whole grain breads, cereals and grain products incorporated frequently?
- ☐ Does each meal include foods with different textures, shapes and colors?
- ☐ Are foods included that represent children's cultural, ethnic and personal food preferences?
- ☐ Are meals modified as necessary to meet children's special dietary needs (e.g., lactose intolerance, food allergies)?
- ☐ Are new foods included along with some favorite foods?
- ☐ Are menus and recipes adjusted to modify fat, salt and sugar?
- ☐ Is 2% or 1% milk served to children age 2 and older\*?

*\* Note: The type of milk recommended for children varies depending on their age. Whole milk **must** be served to children under the age of 2. Reduced-fat milk (2%), low-fat milk (1%) and nonfat (skim) milk are not appropriate for children under the age of 2, as young children need adequate amounts of fat for normal growth and development. For children ages 2 to 5, serve reduced-fat (2%) or low-fat (1%) milk. After age 5, nonfat milk can be served. Acceptance of lower fat milk can be increased if it is introduced gradually. For example, going from whole to 2% to 1%, instead of switching from whole directly to nonfat.*

- ☐ Is nutrition information reviewed before products are purchased?
- ☐ Are all foods safe for young children? (For example, grapes are cut in half lengthwise, chicken is cut in small pieces.)

Adapted from *Making Food Healthy & Safe for Children: How to Meet the National Health and Safety Performance Standards - Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs*. Graves, DE, Suitor CW, Holt KA, eds. National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, 1997.

